

positive steps it has taken in the past to improve respect for human rights and civil liberties. On a recent trip to North Africa, Secretary Clinton was complimentary of Morocco's efforts to reach a peaceful solution in Western Sahara. But the Saharawi people, including Aminatou Haidar, have passionately advocated for the right to self-determination, and the international community, including the U.N., has long supported a referendum on self-determination, which has thus far been blocked by the Moroccan Government.

I have no opinion on what the political status of Western Sahara should be, but I am disappointed that the Moroccan authorities have acted in this way because it only adds to the mistrust and further exacerbates a conflict that has proven hard enough to resolve. Nothing positive will be achieved by denying the basic rights of someone of Ms. Haidar's character and reputation, or restricting the right to travel of other residents of Western Sahara, as the Moroccan authorities have increasingly done in the last 2 months.

In the past, the United States has opposed proposals to extend the U.N.'s mandate in Western Sahara, currently limited to peacekeeping, to human rights monitoring. The recent crack-down on Ms. Haidar and other Saharawis who continue to insist on a referendum on self-determination suggests that human rights monitoring is needed and should be seriously considered when the U.N. mission comes up for renewal in April. I encourage the Department of State to review this question and to consult with the Congress about it.

I am confident that our relations with Morocco, already strong, will continue to deepen in the future. We share many important interests. But the United States was also instrumental in the creation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and while we sometimes fall short ourselves, we will continue to strive to defend those whose fundamental rights are denied, wherever it occurs.

I appreciate the efforts the Department of State has made to try to help resolve this situation. I urge the Moroccan Government to reconsider its decision to deport Ms. Haidar, which will not advance its interests in the conflict over Western Sahara. It should return her passport, readmit her, and let her return to her home and family.

60TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE VOICE OF AMERICA'S UKRAINIAN SERVICE

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, for six decades the Voice of America's, VOA, Ukrainian-language service has been providing an invaluable service through its consistent broadcasting of factual and comprehensive news and information to the people of Ukraine.

During the first four decades of its existence, the Ukrainian service

reached a Ukrainian population starving for information under an extremely strictly controlled, propagandistic Soviet media environment. Ukrainians went to great lengths and some risks to overcome Soviet censorship, which included the jamming of VOA and other shortwave international broadcasting.

During the Cold War VOA Ukrainian provided its listeners with uncensored news about such monumental events as the Hungarian Revolution, the Prague Spring, rise of Solidarity, and the fall of the Berlin Wall. A variety of shows worked to open the outside world to Ukrainian listeners, including a Popular Music Show, a Youth Show, and the long running series Democracy in Action, which was about how democracy works in the United States.

The Ukrainian service also focused on developments within Ukraine itself. VOA broadcasts about Soviet human rights violations in Ukraine, including its coverage of activities of the Helsinki process and the Helsinki Commission, gave sustenance to Helsinki Monitors and other Ukrainian human rights activists, especially those languishing in the gulag for daring to call upon the Soviet government to live up to its Helsinki Final Act obligations. They knew that they were not forgotten. Furthermore, the Ukrainian service also provided objective information about the Chernobyl nuclear disaster and the development of Ukraine's movement for democracy and independence, culminating in the December 1, 1991, referendum in Ukraine in which an overwhelming majority of Ukrainians voted for the restoration of their nation's independence.

For nearly two decades since, VOA's Ukrainian service has continued to fill an important role in Ukraine's evolving democracy. VOA reported on the challenges that Ukraine faced and on the U.S.'s considerable support and assistance for Ukraine, including in the dismantling of the nuclear arsenal it inherited from the Soviet Union. During the Orange Revolution, VOA Ukrainian helped to reassure millions of Ukrainians that the international community would not sanction electoral fraud.

As Ukraine has evolved, so has the Ukrainian Service. While no longer broadcasting on radio as it did for most of its 60 years, it reaches more Ukrainians than ever with daily broadcasts over Ukrainian television—something unthinkable during Soviet rule—and reporting on its website. It continues to report on what is happening in Ukraine, but also it continues to cover every aspect of American life and society. As Chairman of the Helsinki Commission, I commend the ongoing role of VOA's Ukrainian service in helping Ukraine fulfill its aspirations in becoming a more fully democratic, independent, and secure.

WORLD AIDS DAY

Mr. CARDIN. Mr. President, I rise today in recognition of World AIDS Day, an international commemoration held each year on December 1 to raise awareness of HIV and AIDS around the world. The theme for this year's World AIDS Day is "universal access and human rights."

Around the world, 33 million people were living with HIV in 2007, including 2.7 million new infections. In the U.S., more than 1.2 million people are infected with HIV. According to the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS, or UNAIDS, global reports indicated that 2 million people died from AIDS-related causes in 2007.

Globally, sub-Saharan Africa is the hardest-hit region when it comes to HIV infection, accounting for two-thirds of all people living with HIV and for three-quarters of AIDS deaths in 2007. Sadly, 75 percent of young people worldwide who are diagnosed with HIV are girls living in sub-Saharan Africa.

According to the results of a global youth survey conducted in 99 countries, 50 percent of young people have a dangerously low knowledge of how the disease is contracted and can be prevented. Another report by UNAIDS collected data from 64 countries and found that fewer than 40 percent of young people have basic information about HIV. This knowledge gap is particularly disturbing when taking into account a UNICEF report that indicates that 4.9 million young people, ages 15-24, are living with HIV worldwide.

Despite these statistics, recent advances in prevention and treatment of HIV give hope for the future. Globally, approximately 38 percent of the 730,000 children under 15 who needed antiretroviral drugs to treat HIV in 2008 were receiving the necessary therapy, according to UNAIDS. This is a huge increase from just a little over 10 percent in 2005.

The percentage of pregnant women living with HIV who received antiretroviral treatment to prevent mother-to-child transmission has increased from 9 percent in 2004 to 33 percent in 2007.

Despite recent improvements in treatment coverage and declining mother-to-child transmission of HIV, problems remain in preventing and treating the disease. In addition, the number of new HIV infections continues to outpace the advances made in treatment numbers for every two people put on antiretroviral drugs, another five become newly infected with the disease. Clearly, prevention measures are essential to continue the fight against HIV/AIDS.

No State in the U.S. is immune from the effects of HIV/AIDS, and the epidemic is deeply felt among Marylanders as well. At the end of 2007, Maryland had 28,270 people living with HIV and AIDS. That same year, Maryland ranked fourth in the U.S. for the number of AIDS cases per 100,000 people.

The Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene has estimated that

there are between 6,000 and 9,000 Marylanders who are unaware that they are infected with HIV. Of the 1.2 million people in the United States who are estimated to be infected with HIV, as many as 21 percent are unaware that they have the virus.

To address this problem, it is crucial that HIV screening be readily available and accessible to everyone at little or no cost. This will increase the rate of diagnosis in individuals that have HIV and will accelerate their treatment.

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act will address this need and will help achieve the goals outlined by the theme of this year's World AIDS Day campaign of "universal access and human rights."

First and foremost, the bill eliminates discrimination based on pre-existing conditions. Individuals with HIV will no longer be rejected from insurance coverage because of their disease.

The bill also encourages outreach to enroll vulnerable and underserved populations in Medicare and CHIP, including adults and children with HIV/AIDS. It provides personal responsibility education grants to States to create HIV/AIDS education programs for adolescents.

The bill will also cover preventive services recommended by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, including HIV testing for all pregnant women. This testing will be provided at no individual cost, making it universally accessible to all women in the U.S. Testing pregnant women for HIV is vital for prevention efforts, allowing women who test positive to begin antiretroviral drugs to prevent transmission to their baby.

Furthermore, the Mikulski amendment, which I have cosponsored, would allow coverage for HIV testing for all women, regardless of risk, based on expert recommendations from the Health Resources and Services Administration.

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act also provides grants to encourage training health care workers to treat individuals with HIV/AIDS and other vulnerable populations.

Because of the numerous provisions in the bill that will help the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS, several groups have expressed their support for the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. Among the groups that I have heard from is the HIV Medicine Association, an organization representing 3,600 physicians, scientists, and health care professionals who work on the frontlines of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in communities across the country.

We must continue to fight HIV/AIDS, and I urge my colleagues to support the measures outlined in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act that will further our efforts to combat this disease.

RECOGNIZING REAL SALT LAKE SOCCER TEAM

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, I rise and offer my congratulations to the Real Salt Lake soccer team, the newly crowned champions of Major League Soccer. While Utah has a number of sports teams with proud traditions—both collegiate and professional—Real Salt Lake has brought to my home State its first major professional championship since 1971, when the Utah Stars won the ABA title. Fans throughout Utah are thrilled.

Real Salt Lake came to Utah in 2004 and faced difficulties during its first three seasons. In just its fourth season, however, Real Salt Lake made an improbable run to the Western Conference Finals, despite only sneaking into the playoffs on the last day of the regular season. They eventually lost that game by a score of 1-0, but with their first playoff appearance, and opening their new world class soccer-specific stadium, their future was filled with promising signs.

In 2009 Real Salt Lake delivered on that promise. Once again, it was the last team to qualify for the playoffs and was the lowest overall seed. Despite barely squeaking into the playoffs, this team of overachievers sure made some noise once they got there. They quickly reeled off a string of consecutive upsets against glitzier opponents with established stars, dispatching top-seeded and defending MLS champion Columbus and then powerhouse Chicago and its star Cuauhtemoc Blanco.

On November 22, the title game in Seattle pitted the little-known upstarts of Real Salt Lake against the Western Conference champions, the Los Angeles Galaxy and its mega-stars Landon Donovan and David Beckham. After 90 minutes of regulation play and 30 minutes of overtime, the game remained tied at 1-1. In the penalty kick shootout, Real Salt Lake emerged victorious 5-4 as Donovan's potential game-tying spot kick sailed harmlessly over the crossbar. Real Salt Lake had delivered the first championship of its kind in Utah in nearly four decades—and it couldn't have come in a more exciting fashion or to a more deserving group of athletes.

In the end, it wasn't the Galaxy of stars that prevailed; it was Real Salt Lake with its philosophy that mirrors the words emblazoned on the sign in its home locker room: "THE TEAM IS THE STAR." That teamwork was certainly on display in the title tilt against Los Angeles. It was reflected in Real Salt Lake Robbie Findley's breakout 64th-minute strike that knotted the score at 1-1 and made the team's overtime and penalty kick heroics possible. It was reflected in the play of Salt Lake goalkeeper and Cup final MVP Nick Rimando, who turned away penalties from L.A.'s Jovan Kirovski and Edson Buddle before besting Donovan. Finally, RSL's determination to overcome the odds also mirrors that of

its owner, Dave Checketts, coach Jason Kreis and general manager Garth Lagerwey—all of whom turned the team into a champion despite the naysayers who said it couldn't be done.

No, Real Salt Lake's roster did not have the league's biggest stars. But in the words of midfielder Clint Mathis, better known as Cletus, RSL was "the better team in every game." As much as anything else, that explains why champion Real Salt Lake is now the brightest light in MSL's firmament.

Once again, I congratulate Real Salt Lake on this accomplishment. Senator BENNETT and I have introduced a resolution expressing the Senate's congratulations for Real Salt Lake and I urge my colleagues to offer their support.

Mr. BENNETT. Mr. President, I wish to commend and congratulate Real Salt Lake for winning the 2009 Major League Soccer Cup. I am delighted to do so, and feel it is a privilege to honor the MLS Cup champions on the Senate floor. The story of Real Salt Lake is more than just a story about a soccer team capturing the MLS title; it is a story about banding together to overcome obstacles and defying the odds after being counted out and dismissed by "the experts." In many ways, the story of Real Salt Lake is part and parcel of the American experience.

On November 22, 2009, in Seattle, WA, Real Salt Lake, or RSL, faced off against the better-known and widely acclaimed L.A. Galaxy. Just to give a sense of what RSL was up against, listed on the roster for the Galaxy were U.S. National Team star Landon Donovan, and the internationally acclaimed, indeed iconic, David Beckham. The RSL roster, on the other hand, didn't include what's known as a "designated player," or in other words, a recognized superstar. If that wasn't enough, the Galaxy entered the postseason riding high, having finished at the top of the Western Conference in the regular season with a 12-6-12 record, and were expected by most to perform well if not to win the championship. RSL had a far different experience during their regular season, finishing with an 11-12-7 record. Indeed, they barely managed to make it into the eight team playoff that would determine the MLS Cup Champion.

Considering these facts, it would have been easy for RSL to give up. But that wasn't their attitude. When asked about not having a star player, instead of bemoaning that fact, the team's captain, Kyle Beckerman, said, "We've really bought into the 'star is the team' here in Salt Lake. When we work as a team and [are] doing well it's because everybody's playing well. It pays off." This team unity had initially paid off in the postseason for RSL as they defeated the defending champion Columbus Crew, and beat the Chicago Fire in the Eastern Conference finals. Despite this, many doubted whether they could win against the Galaxy in the championship game. When asked